

Masthead Logo

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Fundamental

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the green stains and stinks clinging
to your fingertips.
Don't read books about it,
or not many. Turn the dirt
and comb it smooth.
Plant what you like to eat.
Feed the birds but not so much
that they get lazy
and they will eat the bugs,
who should get their share,
but not one leaf of basil more.
It's all a matter of spirit, balance,
common cruel sense: something dies,
something's born and, in the meantime,
you eat some salad.

FUNDAMENTAL

Acts of God,
the insurance people, whose business depends
on fear of them,
call them: hurricane, monsoon, cyclone,
whirlwind – when your house bears
the branches' lash, big winds
lift and slam the clapboards.
Little spiders, spirit receptors,
living in the walls or swinging
above the sills sense it
first, are humble. The fiery,
the fundamental God
is mad, again. He gets that way,
decides to smash or flood
and it's no use to build a sandbag wall
around your acre, to try to divert
the torrents via channel
dug by hand. Or, He says: No water,

not a drop. I'll burn
their legumes to dust,
swell and crack their black black tongues.
Oh no—fire ants, weevil, mouse-plague,
locusts: with a hundred neighbors
we'll beat the fields with rakes
and brooms—hopeless, hopeless—but our effort
saves a few more loaves
for winter—until God gives them mold: cold *and*
hungry, He says. He says: These bugs
are tiny and bad,
mostly, I don't like their habits—so greedy,
mean, what'll shape them up
is fire and noise, their fields
I'll burn and barren,
what they need are heaps of pumice,
ash up to their ears,
and their sky, under my feet,
their sky, bloody and wracked, I'll split with howls.